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Message Text

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51
ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-04 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03 SAM-01 L-03

NSC-10 AID-20 DRC-01 /095 W
---------- 034896
R 141914Z FEB 74
FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1928
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PA
SUBJECT: SEVEN STUDENTS ARRESTED BY GOP

1. THE GOP ARRESTED SEVEN STUDENTS DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF FEBRUARY, REPORTEDLY FOR PAINTING SLOGANS PROTESTING THE RISING COST OF LIVING ON WALLS NEAR CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY. ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL PRESS, THE STUDENTS ARE BEING HELD INCOMMUNICADO IN THE ASUNCION THIRD PRECINCT POLICE STATION. THE PRESS LISTED THE DETAINEES AS VICTOR GAUTO, DARIO CENTURION, PABLO ALFREDO HERKEN, JUAN FERNANDO KURS, BASILIO BOGADO, LULIO GAMARA, AND ODON OVIEDO.

2. THE ARRESTS HAVE BEEN PUBLICLY CRITICIZED BY THE PARAGUAYAN OPPOSITION. THE RADICAL LIBERAL AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES ISSUED A JOINT COMMUNIQUE FEBRUARY 5 LABELLING THE ARRESTS "A FLAGRANT VIOLATION OF SACRED HUMAN RIGHTS." THE REVOLUTIONARY FEBRERISTA PARTY ISSUED A SEPARATE STATEMENT DENOUNCING THE DETENTION OF OVIEDO, A MEMBER OF THE FEBRERISTA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, AND DEPLORING THE "DANGEROUS POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS" OF THE ARRESTS. THE RECTOR
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OF CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY, JUAN OSCAR USHER, AND THE PARAGUAYAN

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HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (WHOSE PRESIDENT IS A RADICAL LIBERAL DEPUTY) BOTH HAVE APPEALED TO THE GOP TO RELEASE THE STUDENTS.

3. COMMENT: THE ARRESTS ARE IN KEEPING WITH THE STROESSNER REGIME'S LONG-STANDING POLICY OF SUPPRESSING PROTEST MOVEMENTS BEFORE THEY CAN GAIN MOMENTUM. THE GOP REPORTEDLY WAS PARTICULARLY IRRITATED BY SLOGANS CRITICAL OF REPSA, THE PETROELEUM REFINERY MONOPOLY IN WHICH SOME VERY HIGH-LEVEL GOP OFFICIALS ARE RUMORED TO HAVE A FINANCIAL INTEREST. EMBOFF WAS INFORMED BY CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY SOURCE THAT NONE OF THE STUDENTS EXCEPT OVIEDO ARE AFFILIATED WITH ANY ORGANIZED POLITICAL GROUPS, BUT THAT ALL ARE CONNECTED WITH FRENTE, A STUDENT "UNDERGROUND" NEWSPAPER.
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